

and the United States. At first the two governments endorsed Giraud's policy. Prime Minister Churchill expressed the agreement of his government in particular with the "abolition of French legislation subsequent to June 22, 1940," and the "abrogation of all race distinctions between native Moslems and Jewish inhabitants . . ." Secretary of State Cordell Hull backed Churchill by expressing his country's "heartiest accord with this timely and splendid statement of the British Prime Minister" and his "satisfaction in strongly commending this further step toward French unity." Expressions of approval of the scrapping of anti-Jewish legislation came from many sources. At the same time there was bitter disappointment at the act which deprived 40,000 to 50,000 Algerian Jews of their French citizenship. Such expressions came from many quarters, including the Jewish bodies in Algeria, the United States, and especially from the Fighting French who termed the abrogation a racial measure and a "fascist act contrary to the laws of the French Republic." Most critics of this measure felt that it did nothing to improve the position of the Arabs. It was merely an attempt to aggravate the status of the Jews without benefit to anyone else, they said.

Apparently unperturbed by these disputes, Giraud made it clear that two months would be required to reinstate completely the rights of Jews. By an official decree, reported on May 14, organizations were given the right to resume religious, social and political activities. The Kehillah Council and the authority of the Rabbinical Courts were also restored by Giraud's order a few days later. At the same time Jewish officials ousted in June 1940 were reinstated and were paid full back salary for the time they were out of office. Meanwhile, a purge of reactionary and pro-Nazi officials, ordered by Giraud in April on the advice of the Allied authorities, resulted in the dismissal of many officials who were unquestionably identified with the Vichy collaborationists.

## Refugees

As we have observed, President Roosevelt and General Eisenhower promised the release of all political prisoners in North Africa. Among them were, according to statistics

released by General Giraud's Imperial Council, 5,200 Jews from Germany who were interned in Algeria and Morocco, and 13,730 Jews from other European countries working on the Trans-Sahara railroad to Dakar, many of whom had fled to Algeria after the landing of Allied troops. The release of those still interned was extremely slow and, by the middle of January 1943, the only hope for them was Giraud's assurance given to a deputation of Jewish leaders in Algeria and Morocco that the internees would be liberated. The deputation sought an improvement in the position of Jews and the release of the slave workers on the Trans-Sahara Railway and in the Kenadza coal mines. On January 14, it was announced that a joint Anglo-French-American Commission for Political Prisoners and Refugees had been set up in an advisory capacity on the question of political prisoners and refugees. The Commission was to visit all places of internment, to ascertain why prisoners were detained, and to recommend measures for their release and disposal.

Earlier, in December, the Jewish Refugee Committee in Algeria stated that Jews would be released provided Jewish relief organizations would assume the responsibility for their maintenance. As an initial step the J. D. C. made provisions for the liberation of 650 refugees in Algeria and 950 in Morocco. As a result of pressure by American military authorities in Algiers, four hundred French Jews who had escaped to this territory after the occupation of France, were released late in January. Due to the intervention of the Polish Consulate in Casablanca in February, five hundred Polish Jews in Morocco were freed. Following the example of the Polish Government, various other governments-in-exile, during the same month, demanded equal rights for their Jewish nationals in North Africa. Simultaneously, Jews of Portuguese, Spanish and Swiss nationality were likewise freed and promised permission to return to their native countries. A number of refugees received immigration visas for the United States under existing quota regulations.

Reports in March indicated that French authorities in charge of internment camps offered to liberate a number of the Jewish internees on condition that they join the Foreign Legion. They refused but expressed their willingness to enter instead the regular Allied armies or the Jewish Bat-

talions of the Palestine Regiment. The French authorities interpreted this refusal as organized resistance to their wishes and, in reprisal, allegedly sent 10 per cent of the Jewish internees to the prison of Ain El Ourak, in Morocco. At the beginning of April, about nine hundred Jewish internees of German and Austrian origin, held in six labor camps, declared a two-week hunger strike. They declined to receive representatives of the American Red Cross who called at the camps with food and medicaments and tried to persuade the internees to abandon the strike. Subsequently, these Jews were joined by 280 more hunger-strikers, mostly of Rumanian and Hungarian origin. A week later, however, the strike was terminated, following an official announcement that the internees would be released on condition that they emigrate from North Africa within six months. The latest reports by the J. D. C. dated May 17, 1943, gave the following figures on release from camps: in Algeria — 620 refugees, as well as all Polish Jews who have been incorporated in the British and Polish armed forces; in Morocco — 200 internees, as well as all refugees in labor camps; of the latter, 220 had already arrived in Casablanca and other cities; 156 were working for American occupation forces and 53 in private industries.

### Tunisia

Most horrible was the fate of the sixty-three thousand Jews living in Tunisia, where they were exposed to the wrath of retreating Axis troops whose behavior was nothing short of barbarous. As the British forces advanced from Libya, the Jews were rescued, but in most instances deliverance came too late. Many of the cities were in ruins and the majority of the Jews massacred.

The reign of terror was especially severe in the city of Tunis. The entire able-bodied Jewish population was ordered by the Nazi military authorities in January to forced labor constructing fortifications and clearing the docks of the debris left by Allied bombings. The London *Daily Mail* reported that the city had been completely evacuated except for these workers. Charges of aiding the Allied troops led to the execution of a number of Jewish leaders, a collective